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General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2017, 6.05 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Biang (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Iohannis: I would like to begin my statement by conveying my condolences to the people of Mexico in the wake of the 19 September earthquake.

Let me welcome the theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Those are very important objectives that will require all of our determination as responsible leaders in order to achieve them, especially when we see obstacles before us. Indeed, people across the globe still suffer from the brutal effects of war, poverty, inequality and injustice. Tensions over cultural identity and faith are rising, even within traditionally open and tolerant societies. Natural disasters cause increasing damage every season. Terrorist attacks deepen the sense of insecurity.

Even if there are some perceptions that the United Nations has not dealt well with the multitude and complexity of the new crises at hand, it is clear that no path serves us better than multilateralism in finding viable solutions for the current global challenges. More than ever, a rules-based international system — namely, the international rule of law — is vital our success. The United Nations has to be equipped with the essential tools to perform as an efficient Organization that reflects the will of its Member States and enjoys the trust of all the people of the planet. At the same time, we, the Member States, must increase our commitment to the Organization.

Developing and sustaining peace require not only a swift and adequate response to crises, but also an understanding of the root causes of conflicts and insecurity, which rarely emerge from a single source. At the same time, the agenda of the United Nations is not only about conflicts and crises; it is also about sustainable development and the promotion of human rights. It is about hope and a decent life for all, which represent the only foundation on which we can build a safe and sustainable planet. Working on education and ensuring the prosperity of our peoples are the most efficient ways to prevent instability and crises. Focusing our actions on people should remain the ultimate goal. How should we achieve that goal?

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We have to drive the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development forward, including in relation to conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as well as with respect to its Sustainable Development Goals. Romania has formulated essential development policies that will have a real impact on advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We have chosen to involve all political actors, civil society, the private sector and the scientific community in that process. To share our experience in coordinating the national process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to discuss our progress, Romania will submit its voluntary national review during the meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held in July 2018.

We cannot lose sight of the stabilizing role that the United Nations plays in setting the broad parameters of contemporary international relations. That is why our efforts to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations should remain strong. At the end of the day, no matter what a reformed Security Council may look like in the future, we need the United Nations to have robust policy-planning capabilities and the ability to project visions for global peace and well-being beyond present crises.

Romania supports the Secretary-General's focus on the creation of an integrated institutional structure for supporting a holistic approach to crisis management. We also strongly advocate for modernizing and increasing the effectiveness of peace operations. We support the Secretary-General in his efforts to pursue meaningful reform on three priorities: conflict prevention, sustainable development and management reform, including reshaping the Secretariat in order to make the United Nations more efficient.

My country also welcomes the reform of the counter-terrorism architecture of the United Nations, as well as the steps taken by the United Nations to make counter-terrorism a key element of its prevention agenda. Since no country can fight such a terrible scourge alone, we trust that the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism will increase our effectiveness in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that respect, Romania remains committed to the common initiative, developed with Spain, for the possible future establishment of an international court against terrorism.

We also expect to see the United Nations increase its contribution to global efforts in the area of international migration, including in addressing the problem of its main origins. We hope for a consistent follow-up to the New York Declaration. In my view, it is important to ensure that the global compact for migration, on which negotiations will start soon, will cover every aspect of international migration, to the benefit of both migrants and host communities.

We also support the reinforcement of the human rights dimension within all relevant areas of United Nations activities. That is why I welcome the Secretary-General's Human Rights up Front initiative, which aims to mainstream human rights policies throughout the United Nations system.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure of organizing a debate on a very important topic — making education for peace. The use of identity fears and of the us-versus-them paradigm cannot be left unanswered. In the context of increasing violence and disinformation, Romania is convinced that it is only through quality education that we can counter the extremist trends that our young people are facing today.

At the same time, we continue to be concerned about security developments in and around our region. The belt of protracted conflicts around the Black Sea remains a serious threat. We are still witnessing actions that offend the principles and norms of international law. The proliferation of protracted conflicts in our neighbourhood is an obstacle to regional cooperation and has brought our mutual confidence to a historically low level, which is why the international community should actively support and stimulate regional cooperation and confidence-building measures and decisively address conflicts.

Romania has constantly emphasized the importance of strengthening United Nations cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. To that end, we promoted Security Council resolution 1631 (2005) in our capacity as a non-permanent member of the Council at the time. Romania would be proud to once again bring its contributions to the work of the Security Council. Our bid for a non-permanent seat for the 2020-2021 term is about my country's sincere engagement in supporting the efforts of the United Nations for peace and security and our enduring commitment to peace, development and justice. If that endeavour is successful, we will be honoured to work even harder

for the advancement of our common projects and of the Organization as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: The cause that rallies us together is that we are one humankind on one planet. That is the tie that binds us all, and all our differences and national interests are secondary to that overriding cause.

The United Nations was founded to safeguard the human race, its human rights and its potential. We are here to protect people, their existence and their rights. We are here to ensure that the potential of every people, everywhere, fully blossoms into flowers of hope. It is our sacred duty as a generation to take actions that offer hope to following generations.

It is therefore fitting that this year we are meeting to think about focusing on people. In Africa, we should be focusing on investing in the people if the full potential of African people is to be realized. The eradication of poverty and the pursuit of prosperity across the world should be based on raising the potential of the people we seek to support. Development cannot be taken to any people and succeed unless it is driven from within. No human community can take off economically without empowering its people to drive their own development agenda. That is why I underline the importance of investing in our human capital.

However, it is also a foregone conclusion that any effort to invest in the people and raise their potential needs our collaboration as a global family; hence our appeal for concerted action by all States Members of the United Nations and, indeed, many global non-State actors.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations reflects our global resolve to address the world's most pressing challenges in the spirit of sustainable human collaboration. Our unity among nations is imperative because we achieve more when we unite and collaborate. The well-being of global society is more assured when we work in partnerships for development. At the same time, we achieve more within our nations when we include all sectors of society.

Statistics provided by the United Nations and the World Bank show that there is a correlation between the inclusion and empowerment of women, on the one hand, and economic growth and development, on the other. The inclusion and empowerment of women begin with a focus on the girl child. We need to do away with early marriages. Indeed, I am pleased to note a global drop in early marriages from 36 per cent to 26 per cent over a period of two years since 2015.

Malawi is proud to be part of that achievement. Among other initiatives, my Government has enacted a law against marriage below the age of 18. By law, Malawi provides an opportunity for girls to grow, mature and make informed choices about their education and future life, so they are legally protected in that regard. I am therefore proud to reiterate my Government's commitment to promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of women and adolescent girls to violence and all forms of abuse.

Another critical category in the focus on people is young people. Youth empowerment is a way to achieve inclusion. According to *African Economic Outlook 2015*, Africa has the fastest-growing and youngest population in the world. In giving young people the focus they deserve, the African Union agreed in 2015 to designate 2017 the Year of the Youth. This is the year we focus on investing in young people.

Malawi is honoured to be part of the mission for youth empowerment. We have taken decisive measures that include providing technical and entrepreneurial education to the young people who have not had the

opportunity to attend university. At the same time, we are also increasing access to tertiary education.

One more category that needs inclusion is that of persons with disabilities. Malawi is reviewing its policies and strategies in education, health and trade in order to foster the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities. We have also made strides in efforts to eradicate vicious and irrational attacks against persons with albinism. There was a time when these attacks were rampant in some parts of the country. I am glad to report that there have not been any new ones in the past six months.

Malawi is committed to inclusive development. We recognize, however, that the majority of our citizens continue to depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But agriculture is a challenging sector, given the current climate variability affecting many parts of the world. That being the case, Malawi is implementing social protection programmes aimed at cushioning the vulnerable in our society. Our measures include cash transfer programmes, food for work, school feeding programmes and a farm income subsidy programme. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to cooperating partners, including the United Nations, for their continued technical and other support to the success of these programmes.

As we think of focusing on people, it is important to pay close attention to the issues that affect our most vulnerable citizens. Climate change tops the list. For an economy that depends on agriculture, like that of Malawi, where 85 per cent of the people live in agrarian communities, crop failure is always a tragedy. For the past two years, Malawi has suffered alternating heavy rains, floods and drought that have led to crop failure and hunger. The suffering caused by climate change is evident everywhere; it is real. The people who suffer in these tragedies are not just figures and statistics, but real human souls. We must all feel the urgent need to collectively undertake sustainable management of our natural resources. We must remember that if this planet perishes, we all perish with it. This is a matter that demands our collective responsibility. I therefore appeal to all Member States to consider strategies and avenues of collaboration that will enable us to adapt to the fast-changing climate.

Apart from climate change, our world is also collectively facing the threat of terrorism. Terrorism and conflict hinder progress and leave the world in a state of fear, and anything that causes humankind to live in a state of fear is an evil to be fought. Malawi stands in solidarity with the victims of terrorism across the world. We reaffirm our commitment to standing against all forms of terrorism and we stand in solidarity with the victims of human trafficking and forced migration, wherever they are.

Let me now move on to the question of peace. Peace is a prerequisite for development. As a country, we believe in peace as a necessary condition for human existence. For that reason, Malawi has been active in the peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations of the United Nations and the African Union. Today, Malawi reaffirms its pledge to continue to act as an envoy of peace. We believe that is our duty to humankind. We believe that in protecting our neighbours, we protect ourselves.

While we all seek peace as a necessary condition for existence, we also still face the threat of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to humankind and of concern to us all. Ironically, even those nations that possess nuclear weapons are concerned about such threats. The idea of stockpiling nuclear weapons puts the wisdom of humankind in question. Let me categorically express my Government's disapproval of the spread of ballistic-missile technology, which should not be tolerated in any way by any State Member of the United Nations. No country is too small to contribute to the peace agenda of the world and no continent is too poor to be part of the global peace agenda.

Malawi strongly supports the African position in favour of our continent's full representation on the Security Council. The United Nations can no longer claim to take the lead in democracy while sidelining the representation of 1.2 billion people in Africa. How can we claim to be united with those whom we exclude? Africa must be included at the table of global governance. Our rising Africa is always ready to play its role in the global community, and Malawi will continue to be a global player.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (*spoke in French*): I am very proud and honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in my capacity not only as President of the Republic of Madagascar and on behalf of the Malagasy people, but also as President of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and current President of the Summit of la Francophonie.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the election of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák as President of the Assembly and to extend to him my sincerest and warmest congratulations. Madagascar, at his side as a Vice-President of the Assembly, which brings together the 193 States Members of the United Nations, and as host of the sixteenth Summit of la Francophonie, on 26 and 27 November 2016, can only share in the values and ideals that unite us here to achieve a more just and stable world together — development, peace, security and international law.

The theme of our debate, "Focusing on the human being: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", appeals to us all because the very raison d'être of every State is to ensure its people's welfare through the ways and means of their own choosing. For Madagascar, the choice is clear and obvious. We have placed and continue to place the human individual at the centre of our concerns. We therefore welcome the relevance of this year's theme, and I am happy to share with the Members of the Assembly what we have done and strive to do in Madagascar since 2014 to provide a better and decent life for the Malagasy.

The challenges that awaited me in 2014 — when I was elected by the Malagasy people to preside over their destiny on the heels of our protracted emergence from a five-year political, economic and social crisis — were significant. The country and people had been overwhelmed by international sanctions for five years, which exacerbated the poverty rate, affecting 92 per cent of the population, and the incidence of food insecurity and malnutrition. The logical outcome of the crisis was political and social instability and an anaemic economy, not to mention corruption and insecurity.

However, we stepped up to meet those challenges. We were fully convinced that Madagascar had no reason to remain poor, with its potential and its people, more than 50 per cent of whom are women and more than 61.3 per cent under 25 years of age. If everyone makes their own resolute contribution, then I truly believe — optimist that I am — in economic recovery and national reconstruction leading to renewed growth. Those three pillars will enable our State to consolidate a people-centred approach. In fact, like many of the leaders and high-ranking officials present in the Hall, I am an upbeat optimist about my country, my continent and our collective future. Faced with challenges, I often think about what Nelson Mandela said:

> "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. It always seems impossible until done."

There can be no doubt that this affirmation holds true for us all.

Today, one year before Madagascar's 2018 presidential elections, after continued and determined efforts, I can say that Madagascar has reached a milestone and a level that gives rise to the highest hopes, given the progress made in terms of both political stability, however fragile, and economic and social prospects. In that context, I can say that since 2016, Madagascar has raised $6.4 billion in global investment and aid from institutional donors. That has enabled us to start investing in key sectors of our economy and the future of our country. Worksites have been opened everywhere with a view to permanently reducing the poverty of my country and assisting our most vulnerable strata. Our efforts have included institutional standardization, good governance and the establishment of conditions conducive to improving the political climate, in particular through national reconciliation and implementation of our national

development plan for revitalizing our economy through realizing the real potential of our wealth.

Our policy of establishing basic infrastructure in many sectors is beginning to bear fruit. We have received support from our partners in implementing the bases of the 2015-2019 national development plan in agriculture, cattle-raising, energy and fisheries. Lastly, we have shown that Madagascar can play a part on the world stage by successfully hosting and organizing regional and international summits, including for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Summit of la Francophonie, of which we are currently President.

This year, we intend to pursue projects that include establishing special economic zones in two areas, creating pilot digital cities, accelerating our energy transition and strengthening basic infrastructure to improve education and public health. In the social sector, too, we are investing in education and training doctors, teachers and engineers.

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, my Government has developed an ambitious education sector plan to ensure that children in Madagascar have access to quality education. We are also investing in rebuilding our health-care system, which was gutted and destroyed during the years under sanctions. We have also reopened the health centres that were closed during the crisis periods in order to revitalize the network and expand it nationally.

In general, we have established a platform for strengthening our health-care system to coordinate the health-related interventions of our various partners and improve our monitoring of disease. Madagascar has created a digital epidemiological surveillance system that enables it to monitor in real time 28 diseases that have the potential to become epidemics. In addition, the Government has taken steps to promote long-term actions such as launching universal health coverage and reducing maternal and infant mortality, a major aspect of maternal, newborn and child health.

The budget for nutrition has been increased, agricultural production has been diversified and specific water, sanitation and nutrition projects targeting vulnerable populations have been implemented through our national nutrition action plan.

We are also investing in infrastructure to create jobs and accelerate economic growth. We are investing in ports, highways, bridges and airports, which will reintegrate Madagascar into the global economy. We are also strengthening our tourism industry to create decent, paying jobs and preserve our unique and invaluable ecology and biodiversity. In that context, Madagascar has always sought to uphold its international commitments. The commitment we entered into in Durban in 2002 to tripling our protected area has been honoured; today those areas encompass more than 6.9 million hectares, in addition to our marine protected areas.

In order to effectively tackle poverty, we must sustainably create wealth for the largest possible number of people while ensuring the responsible management of natural resources and combating global warming. We must also develop and implement appropriate sustainable development as quickly as possible. Low-carbon, inclusive and shared growth that creates jobs, in particular for women and young people, must be the economic model of tomorrow in order to ensure that future generations enjoy better living conditions in a protected environment.

Given climate change and the threats to natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, we have no choice but to act quickly and we must not waste time. We therefore support the initiatives of the President of France aimed at putting a global environment pact in place. I take this opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for providing financial assistance to Madagascar, which is currently suffering from drought, in the framework of bilateral South-South cooperation. That is concrete action.

Our agriculture, which accounts for 26.4 per cent of our overall gross domestic product and employs more than 75 per cent of the workforce, is considered one of the main drivers of our economy. We are making additional efforts to meet the challenges of establishing and developing agribusiness through land reform in order to enable peasants to own land. We are increasing productivity, building infrastructure, guiding production to allow access to markets, capital, seeds and inputs, and providing technical services and training.

Given all of this, the economic outlook for Madagascar is favourable; our growth rate is around 4 per cent in 2017 and next year will exceed 5 per cent. That will create economic momentum and help to establish a new development trajectory for improving

the lives of the people of Madagascar. Our aim is to raise Madagascar to the rank of a middle-income country by 2030.

I take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that we have begun a reform process for improving the independence of our judiciary and our anti-corruption office. We have prepared measures to protect the integrity of our democratic processes, not to mention public security, which is a very sensitive area in Madagascar. The reforms we have undertaken have allowed us to enjoy lasting economic recovery, and I am convinced that this recovery will be supported by greater investment. Our economic growth rate is expected to reach more than 6 per cent per year by 2020. That is attainable.

Yesterday, in his speech at the opening of the general debate (see A/72/PV.3), the President of the General Assembly expressed the hope that next year his successor would be able to commend the progress made at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly with regard to such global challenges as the state of global peace and security, global disparities and inequalities, persistent poverty, the outrageous fact that we have more than 65 million refugees, international terrorism, human rights, the preservation of the planet and so forth. The General Assembly already has the tools it needs to do this, and now it is a matter of strengthening them and improving the way they are used by emphasizing prevention. Madagascar will support the President in that regard.

This is also an opportunity for me to reiterate from the magnificent sounding board that is the rostrum of the General Assembly the appeal launched in Antananarivo at the sixteenth Summit of la Francophonie:

> "Our Francophone community, aware of its responsibilities and based on the Antananarivo Declaration, is determined to work for shared growth, sustainable and responsible development, and the establishment of fairer and more united economic relations by strengthening our dialogue and influence in international forums. By holding high our values of solidarity and sharing for a more peaceful world, we call for a new model of sustainable and inclusive development that responds to the concerns and meets the expectations of our peoples."

We must also recall the importance of investing in youth.

I was pleased to learn yesterday that the first meeting of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which was established at the initiative of the Secretary-General, will be held next year. Madagascar expresses its readiness to work closely with the United Nations to sustainably eradicate the scourge of terrorism.

Finally, I cannot conclude without expressing my heartfelt sympathy for Mexico, which just yesterday experienced a new, deadly earthquake in Mexico City. On behalf of the country and the people of Madagascar and myself, I would like to express my solidarity, compassion and sincere condolences to the President, the people and the Government of Mexico, with special thoughts for those who have lost loved ones.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its previous session and to wish the current President every success in guiding the work of our session. I would also like to reiterate our congratulations and support to Secretary-General António Guterres for the success of his mission at the head of the Organization.

The theme of the seventy-second session commits us to focusing on people for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. Unfortunately, in these times of turbulence and uncertainty, the ideal of a better

world for all comes up against the crises of a world of conflict that is also in conflict with itself.

On the security and humanitarian fronts, millions of individuals continue to suffer every day from the ravages of war, terrorism and violence in all their forms. With regard to food crises, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 1 billion tons of food are wasted each year, while more than 795 million people go hungry every day.

Where the environment is concerned, global warming has reached an unprecedented level, while agreed-on commitments to addressing the related crises, including adequate Green Climate Fund financing, have been slow to materialize.

With regard to our ethical and moral crises, we see the universal mission of democracy and human rights proclaimed at the same time that it turns in on itself and lets extremist, racist and xenophobic tendencies re-emerge. These dangerous excesses, born out of the absurd claim that one race, civilization or culture is superior to others, have inspired the worst tragedies of history, including slavery, colonization, the Holocaust and apartheid.

If we yield to these abuses, we renounce the founding values of the United Nations. We forget that the true challenges of our time lie elsewhere, such as in the fight against the threat of terrorism. Senegal, I emphasize, vigorously condemns terrorism wherever it may strike. Nothing, and certainly not religion, can justify violent fanaticism. At the same time, we cannot accept the equation of Islam with violence. We cannot accept that Muslims are held accountable for violence of which they themselves are victims.

We are all concerned about the terrorist threat. We therefore have a responsibility to work together to find agreed solutions to this scourge. That is the purpose of the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, whose fourth meeting will be held on 13 and 14 November. Among other topics, the Forum will focus on the doctrinal response of Islam vis-à-vis violent extremism. We wish to see an Africa of peace and security, a place that does not serve as a haven for terrorist groups that are fought and defeated elsewhere. That is why Senegal remains engaged in seven peacekeeping operations, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and welcomes the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel and its partner States in the fight against terrorism.

I would like to reiterate our support for the national peace and reconciliation process under way in our sister Republic of Mali, a process that is taking place with respect for the country's territorial integrity and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2374 (2017).

In the Middle East, Senegal reiterates the right of the Palestinian people to a viable State, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel, each within secure and internationally recognized borders.

In Burma, we are seriously concerned about the abuses of the Muslim Rohingya population. We therefore cannot allow outrage to be a selective emotion, and Senegal urges the international community to take action to put an end to this genuine human tragedy.

In a world of interaction and interdependence, peace today, more so than in the past, is not merely the absence of war. It is also the preservation of the planet's resources, the scarcity of which increases the risk of internal crises and of international conflicts. It is vital to safeguard the integrity of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The future of the planet is at stake.

Peace also requires fairer international trade that paves the way for progress and prosperity for all. The world cannot be at peace with itself as long as there endures a system of unequal exchanges in which the haves continue to earn more and the have-nots to have even less. We must work for mutually beneficial exchanges that protect investment, pay fairly for raw materials and generate shared prosperity. That is the best way to overcome poverty, to support Africa's efforts to emerge and to curb illegal migratory movements.

As the current Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, I welcome the Compact with Africa initiative, launched by Germany within the framework of the Group of 20, to stimulate investment on the African continent. As part of this new momentum of support for development through partnership, Senegal looks forward to hosting three major events on the international community's agenda. They are the third Africa Investment Forum, from 25 to 27 September, in cooperation with China and the World Bank; the International Conference on Quality Infrastructure in January 2018, at the initiative of Japan; and, on 8 February 2018, the replenishment

conference for the Global Partnership for Education Fund, amounting to $3.1 billion over three years. By mobilizing these resources, we will give millions of children the opportunity to go to school and achieve their dreams of a fulfilled life. I thank France for sponsoring the conference, together with Senegal, and we invite all partner and beneficiary States to attend.

The President took the Chair.

The positive changes we seek to promote in the world's affairs will succeed only in the context of an inclusive and equitable momentum that reconciles all of our interests. To that end, the time has come to afford Africa the place it deserves on the Security Council, as called for in the Ezulwini Consensus. It is time to reform the rules of global economic and financial governance, including by combating tax evasion more effectively to help mobilize domestic resources for development financing. It is time to stop seeing Africa as a continent of the future, content with random and uncertain promises that others design, write and interpret on its behalf. Africa wishes to be a stakeholder in a present that takes its interests and its need to emerge into account through renewed and mutually beneficial partnerships. It is in that spirit that Senegal will continue to work with all friendly countries and partners after its mandate on the Security Council ends, in a few months' time.

Despite the uncertainties and difficulties of our times, we must continue to have faith in multilateralism. Preceding generations had the wisdom to understand that isolationism and belligerency are a dead end. Out of the ruins of war, they built the foundations of peace; but it is a peace that is always a work in progress. Whenever its foundations falter, all humankind is threatened. The wisdom of our predecessors demands that we work together to safeguard peace, in the name of our shared humanity, which brings us together and assigns us a shared destiny.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: Allow me to express our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We commend you for immediately identifying six overarching priorities for your tenure, which touch on attaining peace, giving impetus to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change commitments, equality and human rights for all, among others. These priorities truly capture several of the current troublesome global challenges and we look forward to working closely with you on these issues.

The Kingdom of eSwatini would also like to commend the leadership of the new Secretary-General, who is committed to transforming the United Nations into an Organization fit for the twenty-first century. Reform of the United Nations and its attendant bodies has been under discussion for a long time. My delegation believes that fresh impetus must be given to this process and tangible progress made. We are therefore encouraged by the Secretary-General's intention to refocus our attention on the reform agenda.

Reform of the Security Council is a key aspect of the process, and no transformation could be complete without its fundamental change. To that end, the Kingdom of eSwatini wishes to reiterate Africa's call for a permanent seat on the Security Council, in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations is urged to listen to the voice of the millions of Africans who want to contribute to the welfare of the global community as equal partners.

We are confident that under the able leadership of the Secretary-General, the United Nations will reach greater heights in its support for countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The United Nations staff are also to be congratulated on their remarkable work in

supporting inclusive and sustainable development, tackling diseases, promoting peace and stability and creating a conducive environment for humankind to live in, sometimes under extremely inimical conditions.

The theme of this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — resonates perfectly with the motto of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of leaving no one behind. The theme is indeed cross-cutting in nature, as it affects every aspect of life. It calls on all of us to work to create peaceful countries, continents and a sustainable world in which people can lead peaceful and prosperous lives. In that regard, we wish to urge Member States to join hands in addressing the issue of nuclear threats, which have the potential to disrupt world peace. No country has the right to make the world an unsafe place to live in, and we owe it to our people and future generations to put a stop to nuclear threats.

Terrorism remains a threat to the safety of our peoples in various parts of the world. It is a setback to key development issues that deserve the priority attention of the United Nations.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to peace and a decent life for all. We are also firm believers in the principle of consultative decision-making, which is a transparent and all-inclusive undertaking and grants all citizens an opportunity to voice their views so as to constructively contribute to our country's social, economic, cultural and political development.

We are committed to the SDGs, as they provide a development framework within which the global community is able to strive for the inclusive and sustainable development of its respective countries. We have taken several initiatives to mainstream and localize the SDGs through public-awareness campaigns, consultations, education and training at all levels. The Kingdom of eSwatini has also integrated the Goals into its national development strategy, which has been revised to ensure that it is linked to the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Appropriate institutional arrangements are now in place for properly monitoring the implementation of the Goals at all levels.

Sustainable Development Goal 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. That urgency is now a global reality, and recent weather episodes around the world, such as hurricanes, floods and mudslides, have shown that no nation is immune to its effects. The Kingdom of eSwatini is no exception. In 2015 and 2016, the southern African countries, including our Kingdom, faced a severe drought. Its devastating effects, aggravated by the fall armyworm, adversely affected crop production. Funds from other projects and activities were diverted to mitigate the challenges. The scale of the drought led the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to declare it a natural disaster. We are grateful to the United Nations, our development partners, the international community, non-governmental organizations and other local organizations for supporting us during that period.

The Government will continue its programme of farming input subsidies for our farmers, and developing adequate water-harvesting infrastructure to enhance food sufficiency will always remain one of our top priorities. We urge donors and all nations not only to fulfil their pledges to the Green Fund but also to adopt policies that strike a correct balance between the production of essential products and the environmental sustainability we need to protect and preserve the world for future generations.

The net enrolment ratio in primary schools in the Kingdom increased significantly from 79.2 per cent in 2000 to 97.7 per cent in 2015, in a reflection of my country's efforts to ensure that all children have access to education, irrespective of their socioeconomic status. The Government is also providing for our children's needs by placing greater focus on assisting those who are orphaned and vulnerable through various programmes that ensure that they too can access free primary-school education and have adequate nutrition through school feeding schemes.

In our quest to achieve a decent life for all, and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063, the Kingdom of eSwatini has put in place several all-inclusive initiatives that are aimed at ensuring that no one is left behind. The Government also provides grants to the elderly as a way of supplementing their livelihoods.

The Kingdom is also developing innovation parks that will equip our young people with creative skills that can enable them to contribute to the country's sustainable development. We would like to forge partnerships with well-established international parks to leverage and learn from their experience, and we have urged our private sector to take advantage of that initiative. We believe that together with many others,

this initiative will help to nurture a future generation that is skilled and well equipped to provide solutions to the socioeconomic challenges and youth unemployment that our nation is facing.

The Kingdom of eSwatini will host the SADC University of Innovation and Technology, which is expected to produce highly skilled manpower and provide solutions for transforming economies, thereby enabling countries in the SADC region to close their skills gap. We are seeking the support of highly educated facilitators and the international community to make that project a reality.

Tackling poverty, hunger and the disease burden and improving our people's basic standards of living have been at the centre of our Vision 2022 and national development strategy. The importance of human capital investment and promoting the interests of vulnerable groups represent crucial steps towards economic growth and prosperity.

I have full confidence in our innovative and educated workforce, which has demonstrated an indomitable spirit and resilience in overcoming the severe social, economic and environmental challenges of recent times. As a result, our national guiding theme for 2017 is "Rising above adversity to create prosperity for all". The critical importance of the demographic dividend to Africa's transformative development has been acknowledged by African leaders. They have recognized the urgent need to accelerate the implementation of the African Union Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth.

The HIV and AIDS pandemic remains one of our priority areas, as it continues to undermine our sustainable development objectives. It is stretching our health resources to the limit and calls for collective action on the part of the Government, international donors and other stakeholders to address it. As a nation, we have decided to work to reach AIDS-free status by 2022, a vision in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3, ending AIDS by 2030.

We are pleased to be able to inform the Assembly of the positive results we have attained through our concerted policies in tackling this scourge. Key findings from Swaziland's second HIV incidence measurement survey show that we have achieved a more than 70 per cent viral load suppression among adults living with HIV. We also reduced HIV incidence by nearly half between 2011 and 2016, a major achievement. While we are encouraged by these results, we will continue to do everything in our ability to ensure that there are no new infections.

We are also pleased to mention that our efforts to tackle malaria eradication are being recognized. We were honoured that during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in January, Africa's Heads of State and Government elected us Chair of the African Leaders' Malaria Alliance. Tomorrow we will hold a side event on malaria here at United Nations Headquarters. Malaria is a scourge that requires our concerted efforts to eradicate from the face of the Earth. We aim to partner with our private sector in Africa and beyond to mobilize resources to combat it. We appreciate our partners' support and also appeal to financial institutions, development partners and donors to join us in this fight, since it will pay handsome dividends for the people of our beloved African continent.

Among the political issues that have continued unresolved for too long is the denial of the right of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to participate in the United Nations system. Taiwan has shown significant commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and has aligned its priorities with those of the Organization. Humankind could therefore benefit a great deal from Taiwan's experience in the framework of our global agenda as Member of the United Nations.

I reaffirm the full commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of eSwatini to implementing the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, it is worth noting that while our Goals may be universal, we do not all have the same capabilities and capacities for implementing them. As we recognize those resource and capacity constraints, therefore, we need to enhance resources, capacity-building, technology transfer and South-South cooperation so as to support lower middle-income countries, along with the least developed countries, in achieving our ambitious and transformative Agenda.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Serraj (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and to wish you every success in your work. I commend your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for all his efforts and wish him every success in his future endeavours. I would also like to note the ongoing wise efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to implement the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the areas of peace, security and human rights.

The members of the General Assembly are aware of the challenges that my people are facing in these very trying times, starting with the revolution of February 2011 and its consequences, which have been a war and the negative involvement of a number of States. We have striven to mitigate and reduce our people's suffering and to achieve real success. However, a great many problems remain and will not be resolved without the joint efforts of my country and of friendly States and the United Nations to enable us to establish the rule of law and democracy in Libya.

I would like to commend the efforts of all those who have worked to find a political settlement to the crisis and to thank a number of States and regional and international organizations — including the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations — for helping us to restore stability in my country. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Special Envoy, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, and to wish him every possible success in proposing rapid solutions to the current crisis.

The Libyan Political Agreement reached following two years of negotiations remains the cornerstone for our efforts to address various problems and build the institutions of State. We are undergoing a transition that will ensure that we can coexist, leave the past behind us and stabilize our country, and the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord is the fruit of all this work. It is essential to implementing and carrying out national reconciliation with the participation of all, without exception.

Since the outset we have been determined to confront our crises, despite the difficulties they pose, with wisdom, patience and foresight, and we have been able to resolve a number of problems. We have put an end to the violence in Tripoli and other Libyan cities, where law enforcement and security agencies have started to discharge their mission. A number of embassies have returned, as will the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in the near future. Certain displaced individuals have returned to their home cities, although that has not been possible for others, owing to the lack of services, undermined by the military clashes. We continue to work to restore peace and security and rid ourselves of those trying to spoil things.

In the economic field, we are now producing 1 million barrels of oil a day, up from 150,000 in March 2016. We must also mitigate the suffering that many have been experiencing during this development period, and we hope that with the restoration of security, the provision of the necessary financial resources and the resumption of activity by foreign firms we will be able to rebuild our State. We have demanded that the embargo on frozen assets be lifted, because it is costing the Libyan State close to $1 billion a year, and we sincerely hope that this will happen, especially since current circumstances are improving.

In the area of national reconciliation, we have held a number of meetings aimed at achieving unity and resolving our differences and divisions. The decision-making monopoly of the Presidency of the Council of Deputies has resulted in political stagnation, preventing the majority from implementing the Political Agreement. In July, we came up with a road map for extricating ourselves from this crisis, providing for a referendum and presidential and parliamentary elections next year and the establishment of a supreme

national council for reconciliation, mandated to address such issues as compensation, amnesty and others during the transition period. This positive vision was reaffirmed at the Paris meeting, where a consensus was reached on our progress towards democracy and the peaceful settlement of our problems through elections rather than armed confrontation — needless to say with the exception of the war against terrorism, which must continue — and through the restoration of ourmilitary and executive institutions.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, we were successful in our attempt to liberate the cities of Sirte and Benghazi, among others, from Da'esh. However, we continue to have problems in dealing with the consequences of their seizure by terrorist organizations. We pay tribute to the memory of the martyrs who have laid down their lives to liberate the cities of Libya, and reiterate the need for a strategic partnership with all friendly States, especially the United States of America, which we thank for its support in halting the acts of these terrorist organizations.

We must all understand that the fight against terrorism is not over. There are new hotbeds of tension and terrorism. Terrorists who have fled Iraq and Syria have now come to our country. We ask to be allowed to rebuild our army so that it can confront them and protect our country.

My country is experiencing other difficulties, including illegal migration. A number of migrants have entered Libyan territory and used it as a transit country on their way to Europe across the Mediterranean. Libya suffers from this problem just as other States do. It is a burden on our already very limited resources and has a number of adverse security and economic consequences. We also lack the necessary resources to tackle the armed smuggling networks plaguing our country. We thank all who have helped us to address with this problem, especially Italy, which has recently provided training assistance in a number of cities. We welcome the support provided by France, Italy and Germany, especially in monitoring our southern borders, where most illegal migrants cross. We do not possess the capacity to tackle this problem alone.

Another issue related to the migrants and refugees in Libya is how to pay for the aid they need. The Government of National Accord is working to assist them as much as possible, and we welcome the help we have had from humanitarian organizations, especially in the form of shelters. We would like to return these refugees to their homes rather than grant them citizenship in our country. Libya participated with European States in the Paris summit at which an agreement emerged aimed at finding political solutions to restoring stability throughout Libya. It was also agreed that we need to be provided with the assistance necessary to fund development programmes in the migrants' countries of origin.

My country views human rights as extremely important. Since the 2011 revolution we have adopted a number of laws promoting human rights, but as this is a transitional period we are still working to restore State authority throughout the country, and that has naturally had an impact on the security situation. The Presidency Council is applying the no-impunity principle in order to gradually enable the law-enforcement agencies to take up their necessary functions. We would like to benefit from United Nations technical expertise in the field of human rights, and we have therefore been inviting human rights special programmes to visit Libya since 2012, as was reiterated during the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council in March.

One of the crucial current issues for the United Nations is Security Council reform. In that regard, we welcomed the Council's adoption of resolution 2378 (2017) a couple of days ago. We hope that reform will help us in developing the role of our Organization by, for instance, granting a permanent seat on the Security Council to the African continent, in keeping with the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration on the reform of the United Nations.

The situation in the Middle East remains an absolute priority. Despite the crises that we are experiencing, we have spared no effort to support the Palestinian people in their attempts to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reiterate our support for the Arab Peace Initiative to settle the Palestinian issue, and we urge the world's major Powers to assume their responsibilities in that regard. We wish to see a peaceful solution to the crises in Syria and Yemen in order to protect them from division and collapse as a result of the destructive conflicts raging through their countries and to fulfil the aspirations of their peoples in a dignified way that respects human rights and the rule of law.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for holding a special meeting on Libya this morning that

attracted a great deal of international interest and at which everyone present reaffirmed that the backdrop to any solution must be a political one. Assistance will be needed for the presidential and parliamentary elections next year. We ask the Secretary-General and the Special Representative for Libya, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, to present us with a timeline and send a clear message to all who attempt to hinder the process that there can be no military solution and that negotiations with authorities parallel to the Government of National Accord must stop, as they are in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. I would like to reiterate our desire for all sectors of the Libyan population to be able to exercise their rights to national self-determination and live in a State that enjoys the rule of law.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya for the statement that he has just made.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waqa: It is an honour to be here for the opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Republic of Nauru, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your recent assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you steer its work during this critical session. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his exceptional work.

At this juncture, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest sorrow and condolences to our brothers and sisters who have suffered so much from the series of hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States and to our brothers and sisters in Mexico for the devastating earthquakes. Their suffering and grief is shared by us all, and we pray that God will be their strength and great provider during their recovery efforts.

The Government of Nauru shares the international community's view that full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be at the centre of our work in the coming year. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal agreement representing our collective priorities, from the largest to the smallest nations among us. Bringing that same approach to our implementation effort is the only way to ensure that no country is left behind.

Members will recall the five words that guided our work on the SDGs — people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership — which, I am sure, gave inspiration to the President's choice of a theme for this new session of the General Assembly. Those five words are broad enough to encompass our collectively held ideals while accommodating our tremendous diversity. In the case of Nauru, our status as a small island developing State underlies every aspect of the lives of my people.

The global economic system was not created with small islands in mind. Small size and population, geographic isolation, few natural resources and a high level of vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks are among the characteristics that make small islands a special case for development. Our people crave prosperity just like anyone else. However, the well trodden pathways to development are simply not available to us.

More than most, our prospects depend on a stable planet, including a safe climate and healthy oceans. That is why Nauru was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and why we have made the implementation of our national contribution to the Agreement our top priority. Nearly every country has made that solemn commitment, and we are now two years closer to the time when we will be held to account.

With regard to climate action in developing countries, implementation is a collective responsibility. As developing countries, we have demonstrated our political will to be part of the global effort, but most of us lack the resources to fully implement our contributions alone. In that regard, we call on our development

partners to step up their assistance programmes. Nauru's climate priorities fall into four categories — renewable energy, land rehabilitation, water security and infrastructure-proofing. We are looking to build genuine and durable partnerships to achieve those objectives.

While the Paris Agreement was a historic diplomatic achievement, we must remember that we remain well off track for achieving its central goal of keeping warming below 1.5°C. Failure to achieve that goal would be devastating for small islands, but we should not pretend that any additional warming is safe. Negative impacts in the form of superstorms, irregular rain patterns and heatwaves are here with us now and will continue to get worse for the foreseeable future. As I said at last year's World Humanitarian Summit, all of us must face up to some very difficult questions. How will we feed a planet of 9 billion people when crop yields are projected to fall? How will we share declining freshwater resources as glaciers disappear and drought becomes commonplace in many regions? How will we protect the millions who are rendered homeless when low-lying coastal areas are inundated? How can those and many other challenges be managed effectively so that we can avoid breakdowns in governance and a proliferation of failed States?

It is difficult to see how we can realize our vision for a peaceful planet without answers to those questions. Climate change will be the defining security challenge of the century, and we are simply not prepared for life on a hotter planet. For that reason, Nauru supports the proposal by the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) that the United Nations appoint a Special Representative on climate and security, whose work must begin with an assessment of the United Nation's capacity to respond to climate disasters.

In addition to a safe climate, the prosperity of Nauru's people depends on a healthy ocean. In that regard, we must show ambition in tackling the mounting threats to the health of our oceans. The special case of SIDS needs to be enshrined in our work across all ocean sectors and in the new implementing agreements on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Launching and concluding an intergovernmental conference to draft a new implementing agreement in line with the common heritage of mankind that would allow for the protection and preservation of the oceans should be an urgent priority in that work. The security of our oceans is another problem that all of us must tackle.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is another great threat and represents an economic loss to our small economy. Along with transnational crimes that occur within our waters and those of our neighbours, it is an issue that requires cooperation on a number of fronts through inter-agency and intercountry partnerships. I call on our friends and partners to continue with existing programmes, such as the Shiprider Agreement and other ongoing bilateral cooperation arrangements negotiated by the United States, as well as the maritime surveillance programmes provided by Australia and New Zealand. We look forward to partnering with other law-enforcement agencies throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

In order for the people of Nauru to benefit from those global efforts to protect the climate and ocean, we will have to build genuine and durable partnerships that are based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of the real needs on the ground. Too often, small countries like mine have been excluded from international programmes. Funding mechanisms can be effectively impossible to access because the application and reporting requirements exceed the capacity of our domestic institutions. Private investment is unreliable and rarely available to support the provision of basic services and the construction of critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, the most promising financing models for small developing countries, such as direct access and direct budgetary support, are rarely offered by our development partners. That must change. We need our partners to meet the needs of small and vulnerable countries.

We know that we too must become better partners, which is why my country has emphasized the importance of capacity-building as a critical component of our international cooperation. In order for our people to prosper, we must invest in building their knowledge and skills. There is no shortage of workshops held in the Pacific region. What Nauru needs is a sustained capacity-building effort that is backed by real resources, including the long-term, in-country presence of our development partners when appropriate, so that we are left with strong domestic institutions run by a skilled domestic workforce.

I cannot stress the importance of a robust capacity-building programme enough. As a former schoolteacher,

I am passionate about the importance of high-quality education for my people. We have our own training programmes for our high school and tertiary students, as well as programmes for those already in the workforce. We acknowledge the generous support of our friends and partners, who have provided scholarships and technical workshops that are invaluable to our long-term development, particularly in high-priority areas such as the health sector, education, engineering, public administration and good governance.

Having a healthy economy and a productive people also requires international relations to be peaceful and stable, not only in the Pacific but throughout the world. With regard to the Pacific region, Nauru calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to enter into dialogue with the other countries involved in the dispute on the Korean peninsula. The threats made against the Republic of Korea, Japan, Guam and cities of the United States do not help the situation, and they potentially put many small countries in the Pacific, including Nauru, in the line of fire. That is completely unacceptable, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must stop such threats, including the launching of rockets into the Pacific Ocean.

Further to the south, we have in Taiwan a State that is peaceful, prosperous and happy. Taiwan has the technical and financial capacity to contribute to world peace and development, particularly where its technical prowess and know-how are concerned. It wishes to contribute and participate freely through the partnerships and activities of the United Nations system, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Health Organization, UNESCO, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other United Nations-related agencies and activities. In order to ensure that the Taiwanese people can make positive contributions to societies around the world, they must be given the freedom to travel where they choose. We are, after all, a world that calls for inclusiveness and for no one to be left behind. In that same spirit, Nauru renews its call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

The phrase "people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership" elegantly captures the scope of our work over the coming year and beyond. However, there is another word that begins with *P* that we must not ignore. That word is power. Power will determine whether resources are mobilized for people or for profiteering. Power will determine whether the voices of the marginalized are heard. Power will determine whether we leave a healthy and bountiful planet for future generations. To ignore the role of power in shaping our future is to cede what little power we may have. If we are to achieve our ambitious goals for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable planet, we will have to grapple with power as it actually exists in the world, including all of its inequities and perversities. That will undoubtedly be the most difficult aspect of the task before us.

In closing, I would like to thank the Governments of Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, the European Union, Italy, Israel, Cuba, the Republic of Korea and the United States for their continued support and assistance to Nauru. We value their friendship very much, and we look forward to their continued cooperation and support.

Along those lines, I would like to make a special acknowledgement to the United Nations for the support it provided to Nauru nearly 50 years ago, leading to our independence. On 31 January 2018, we will celebrate our golden jubilee as a sovereign and democratic nation. I would also like to thank all the countries that supported us in exercising our self-determination and achieving our independence.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President

of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Van Thio (Myanmar): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that under your able leadership, this year's session will be fruitful.

Before I go into the substance of my statement, I would like to take the opportunity to express my deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Mexico for the loss of life and property caused by the deadly earthquake that hit Mexico City.

I also wish to convey our profound sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of the United States and States of the Caribbean, which have experienced the horrendous consequences of consecutive hurricanes in a short span of two weeks. Our sympathies also go to the people of Puerto Rico, who are still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Maria. The intensity and frequency of such natural disasters are evidence of climate change, now becoming a reality that poses a serious threat to our planet. Its impacts are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. Myanmar is highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, so as a country frequently affected by storms, floods and droughts we welcome the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that yesterday Myanmar deposited with the Secretary-General its instruments of ratification of the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol.

We welcome the current session's theme, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Peace and stability are something that we are striving to achieve in Myanmar after nearly seven decades of civil strife and conflict.

Last year, from this rostrum, our State Counsellor, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, set out our Government's vision for ending decades of internal armed conflict in Myanmar and finding lasting and meaningful solutions to the complex situation in Rakhine state (see A/71/PV.11). Today, one year later, I am here to apprise the Assembly of the progress that we have made and the remaining challenges that lie before us. Given that the situation in Rakhine state has understandably been the focus of the world's attention in recent weeks, let me start by addressing that issue.

Yesterday, the State Counsellor briefed the diplomatic corps in Myanmar on the Government's efforts to promote national reconciliation and peace. She highlighted the achievements of the past 18 months and the challenges that remain. With respect to the situation in Rakhine, she said that Myanmar shares the concern of the international community regarding the displacement and suffering experienced by all communities affected by the latest round of terrorist attacks. She also stressed that:

> "We condemn all human rights violations and unlawful violence. We are committed to the restoration of peace, stability and the rule of law throughout Rakhine state. The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians. Human rights violations and all other acts that impair stability and harmony and undermine the rule of law will be addressed in accordance with strict norms of justice. We feel deeply for the suffering of all of the people who have been caught up in the conflict."

The situation in Rakhine has been one of the top priorities of the Government since it assumed office. The Government has been endeavouring to restore peace and stability and to promote harmony among all communities. The Central Committee on the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of Rakhine State, chaired by the State Counsellor herself, was established on 30 May 2016 to address that state's specific needs. Additionally, in August 2016, she set up an advisory commission, headed by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to advise the Government on sustainable solutions to the complex situation there.

We have been striving to ensure that Rakhine state is duly developed while ensuring peace, stability and societal cohesion. That is no easy task. The deep mistrust that has developed over decades has to be slowly chiselled away. On 24 August, the Annan Advisory Commission released its final report. Our Government welcomed it immediately.

We had hoped that today would be an opportunity for us to communicate to the world the progress that we have made towards implementing the Advisory Commission's recommendations. It is, therefore, with

deep regret that I must instead primarily address the Assembly on the current state of affairs in Rakhine state following the recent attacks by the terrorist group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) last month.

As the General Assembly is aware, within hours of the release of the Advisory Commission's report, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out against 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine. The ARSA claimed responsibility for the attacks. Those attacks ignited fresh violence in the region, resulting in significant loss of life, widespread suffering and the mass displacement of many communities. Many have had to abandon their hearths and homes — not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also other small minority groups, such as Daing-net, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been oblivious to their existence and plight.

Let me be clear. The Government of Myanmar is extremely concerned about the present situation in Rakhine state. Our deepest sympathy goes to the families of all innocent civilians and members of the police and security forces who have lost their lives. There is no denying that this is a problem of significant magnitude.

I am happy to inform the Assembly that the situation has improved. No armed clashes have been reported since 5 September. Accordingly, we are concerned about reports that the flow of Muslims crossing into Bangladesh remains unabated. We would need to find out the reason for that exodus. What is known is that the great majority of the Muslim population have decided to remain in their villages.

We share the need to ensure that vital humanitarian assistance is provided to all those in need. Moreover, we acknowledge that the duty to respond to the challenges in Rakhine state is first and foremost the duty of our national Government. The situation in Rakhine is complex. The challenges we face are significant. Accordingly, we have adopted an integrated national strategy to address the problem.

I am pleased to announce the launch of a committee chaired by the Union Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission. To ensure transparency and accountability, the committee is mandated to publicly issue a progress report every four months. In addition to the committee, we intend to establish an advisory board made up of eminent persons from both Myanmar and abroad.

At present, humanitarian assistance is our first priority. We are committed to ensuring that aid is received by all those in need, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that a new Government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement, has also started its humanitarian assistance activities.

On behalf of the Government of Myanmar, I would like to express my gratitude to all those countries that have offered to contribute to that assistance programme. In particular, we are grateful for the generous offers of support that we have received recently from many of our friends across the world. At the same time, we are working hard to strengthen relations with Bangladesh. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and the National Security Advisor visited Bangladesh in January and July. We were hoping for a visit from the Home Affairs Minister of Bangladesh, but it had to be postponed, as the Minister could not come in August. We will welcome him whenever he is able to come and hope to take forward our cooperation on border security matters.

There has been a call for the repatriation of the displaced people who have recently fled from northern Rakhine to Bangladesh. In her statement yesterday, the State Counsellor said that Myanmar was prepared to start the verification process at any time. Our two neighbours had experience with such a process in 1993, through the establishment of a joint working group for implementing the repatriation process, and we can develop a process based on that experience.

Myanmar stands together with the rest of the world in condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and our position is clear. We cannot condone terrorism. At the same time, the Government is working to ensure that acts of terrorism will not distract us from pursuing the long-term strategy that is necessary in order to address the complex challenges in Rakhine state today. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state provide us with a clear road map. Our implementation committee began its work last week.

and we will be inviting observers to witness some of our programmes in due course.

The recent events in Rakhine state are a painful reminder that we face difficult challenges ahead on the long journey to peace, prosperity and democracy. However, I would like to reiterate that our commitment to peace remains as strong and as unwavering today as it was a year ago, when our State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, first addressed the General Assembly from this rostrum. As part of that commitment, we have made the national reconciliation and peace process our top priority. Our vision here is clear — we want to achieve a democratic, federal union, based on the principles of freedom, justice, equal rights and self-determination.

With regard to the peace process in Myanmar, I am pleased to inform you that in May we successfully held the second session of our Union Peace Conference. For the first time, we were able to discuss and define key principles that will form the basis of a federal, democratic Union. The Union Accord, consisting of 37 principles covering the political, economic, social and environmental sectors, was signed by representatives of the Government, the Parliament, the military, ethnic armed organizations and political parties.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Although we have made real progress, we know that the road ahead is long and convoluted. Our democratic transition is fragile. At this important juncture in our nation's history, we only ask that the international community continue to support our efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and democracy.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Myanmar's faith and confidence in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I would also like to emphasize our firm commitment to a world in which peace and harmony prevails.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the President of the State of Kuwait, allow me at the outset to extend our sincere congratulations to the President and his friendly country, the Republic of Slovakia, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to assure him of my country's support and of our desire to facilitate his work and fulfilment of his responsibilities. We are fully confident that his great experience in international affairs will contribute to the conduct of the session's work.

Furthermore, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the outstanding work of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, during his capable and successful presidency of the previous session. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on the deserved trust that the international community has placed in him and his friendly country of Portugal with his appointment as the new Secretary-General. We would like to wish him success in serving the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in his efforts to strengthen peaceful coexistence among nations, maintain international peace and security and reinforce international cooperation in all fields, including the follow-up to and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

In that connection, we would like to say that we value the vital and effective role played by his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, over the past 10 years, and the great achievements accomplished during his tenure, such as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the adoption of the SDGs, among others.

The State of Kuwait firmly believes in the vital and effective role played by the United Nations and its various bodies, agencies and programmes in addressing the increasing global challenges and risks. We welcome the proposals and plans put forward by the Secretary-General to restructure the Secretariat so as to make it more coherent, promote its effectiveness, and ensure the cohesion and coherence of its activities in maintaining international peace and security and the follow-up to and the implementation of the SDGs.

We renew our call with regard to the need to reform the Security Council so as to reflect new international realities in a manner that can reinforce its credibility and legality and ensure a permanent Arab representation on the Council, commensurate with the number of Arab States and their contribution to supporting the various activities of the United Nations.

We are concerned about the challenges and risks that have arisen in various regions of the world, such as the spread of violence, extremism and terrorism, as well as the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of their use. We also deplore violations of human rights such as those of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar. We call for all acts of oppression against them to end immediately. They must be granted the right to citizenship and a decent life.

The State of Kuwait has a firm and principled position when it comes to condemning terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. We support all international measures to combat terrorism and eliminate terrorist organizations. Kuwait also contributes significantly to the provision of logistical support to the international alliance against extremist groups.

It is regrettable that for multiple reasons the Middle East region has the lion's share of such extremist challenges in various forms. We therefore need concerted international efforts to deal with them, and we must concentrate on addressing their root causes so that the world can enjoy security and stability. Such challenges and risks threaten the very essence of international peace and security, with the majority of victims being innocent civilians.

Our brother Republic of Iraq is facing significant security, political and economic challenges, the most prominent of which is combating terrorist organizations and extremist groups. In that respect, we congratulate the Government and the people of Iraq on the victories that its forces have achieved on the ground in battling the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and on their successful liberation of numerous areas previously under the control of ISIL. We hope that such victories continue until the remaining areas still under ISIL's control are entirely liberated. We hope that they can contribute to national reconciliation efforts among the various elements of the Iraqi people, leading to the restoration of peace and stability in Iraq and the maintenance of its unity, independence and territorial integrity, while creating an appropriate environment for launching the process of reconstruction and ensuring the return of refugees to their homes.

In that context, and in response to the calls for humanitarian and development assistance, the State of Kuwait, in cooperation with Iraq and the international community, will host an international donors conference in the coming year to rebuild the areas devastated by ISIL. We renew our commitment to providing all possible forms of support to help Iraq fulfil its remaining obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions so as to regain its regional and international role and standing.

This year marks 50 years since the occupation of Palestinian territories began in 1967. It is the only Arab cause that has been the subject of endless United Nations resolutions and international and regional initiatives only to see none of them implemented, owing to the intransigence of the occupying Power, Israel, and its explicit and blatant refusal to implement Security Council resolutions of international legitimacy. The most recent is resolution 2334 (2016), which stressed that the Israeli settlement activities are illegal and illegitimate and called for them to cease, as they undermine the prospects of reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The State of Kuwait stresses its condemnation of the Israeli violations that occurred recently at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem in a new attempt to alter its historical status. We categorically reject all illegal Israeli policies, plans and practices aimed at Judaizing the Holy City, erasing its Arab identity, disrupting its demographic structure and isolating it from its Palestinian perimeter. Such violations represent a flagrant threat to international peace and security and run counter to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

We therefore appeal to the international community and the Security Council to honour their responsibilities and continue pressuring Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, allowing the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate political rights and the recognition of their own independent State over their own territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital and based on the borders of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is deplorable that since the onset of the crisis in Syria, we have seen horrifying actions in that ongoing conflict, confirming that destruction is its main theme. Its economic, social and humanitarian impact has yet to be evaluated or calculated, but it will, unfortunately, contribute to the loss of an entire generation of our brothers in Syria. The death toll of the conflict has exceeded 400,000 and nearly 12 million Syrians are either displaced or refugees, in addition to the massive destruction of property and infrastructure that has occurred in the majority of Syria's provinces.

We estimate my country's voluntary contributions at various conferences to be $1.6 billion, the bulk of which has been given to specialized United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with humanitarian affairs. Despite the political and humanitarian efforts aimed at curbing the conflict in Syria, the reality on the ground remains unchanged, making it clearer than ever that the conviction and position that we have advocated from the beginning — that the crisis cannot be resolved by military means — is correct.

The pace of the political track is still slow. Since the issuance of the communiqué of the Geneva Conference on Syria (A/66/865, annex), whose content has led to sharp differences over its interpretation, we have witnessed seven rounds of Syrian talks in Geneva among the various parties over a period of five years, without any significant progress. We must, therefore, intensify our efforts to bring together the parties to the conflict, so that they can hold direct talks aimed at finding a peaceful settlement in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Such talks should lead to the creation of a political situation that is able to maintain the unity, independence and sovereignty of Syria and meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

We reaffirm our full commitment to the unity of Yemen and respect for its sovereignty and independence. We reject any interference in its internal affairs and stress our support and backing of constitutional legitimacy in Yemen. A political solution in Yemen should be based on the three agreed actions — in other words, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the national dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015). The State of Kuwait has made significant efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict in Yemen. Last year, over a period of three months, we hosted political consultations between the Yemeni parties under the auspices of the United Nations aimed at restoring stability in that brother country. In that regard, we reiterate our readiness to host our Yemeni brethren for the signing of a final accord reached among them.

We renew our support for the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement to that crisis, thereby ending the suffering of the Yemeni people, who are facing dire humanitarian and economic conditions. We believe that the optimal solution for addressing those humanitarian conditions requires the restoration of peace and stability in Yemen in a manner that would preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the regional level and within the framework of the efforts undertaken by Kuwait to consolidate the foundations of good neighbourly relations, we renew our call to the Islamic Republic of Iran to take serious confidence-building measures and establish relations based on reciprocal cooperation, mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. We also call on it to renounce practices that jeopardize the security and stability of the region and contradict the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and to adhere to the resolutions of international legitimacy. Such measures would enable us to direct our efforts towards reconstruction and development, so that all the peoples of the region can enjoy security, peace and well-being.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development faces major challenges, thanks to erroneous behaviour on the part of human beings over the years and the impact of natural disasters and greenhouse-gas emissions — challenges that only increase our international responsibility. It is therefore incumbent

on us to do our utmost to fully implement the 2030 Agenda. To that end, we must enhance the mechanisms of development partnerships in order to keep pace with the needs and requirements of sustainable development. By doing that, we will be able to fulfil our international commitments and show our solidarity at the global level. That would constitute a real start towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a view to eliminating every form of poverty. In the context of the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we must address the impact of climate change, as it represents one of the biggest impediments to achieving the SDGs, and we must do so by following the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility.

The State of Kuwait is steadily forging ahead under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, as we work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by mainstreaming its goals in Kuwaiti national development plans and programmes, with the participation of all sectors of civil society and all partners. My country's development plan, the New Kuwait 2035 strategy, contains seven basic pillars that aim to transform Kuwait into a leading regional financial, commercial, cultural and institutional hub.

The State of Kuwait has consistently shouldered its regional and international responsibilities with a view to achieving development in its various economic, social and environmental dimensions. We have come a long way along the path of implementing the noble initiatives of His Highness the Amir aimed at advancing international partnerships and reinforcing Kuwait's previous humanitarian and development efforts.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to express the gratitude of the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait for the trust that those present placed in my country during the elections held in June by electing it as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. Almost 40 years after Kuwait's first non-permanent membership in the Security Council from 1978 to 1979, we return today to renew our commitment to strengthening the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, the prevention of conflicts and the support of mediation efforts and endeavours for the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

We are also committed to supporting efforts to make the Council more transparent and promote the participation of small States in the work of the United Nations and its bodies. We will strive to support and activate the international response to the refugee and immigrant crises and all other humanitarian crises resulting from wars and conflicts, which have intensified in recent years, while hoping that peace and security prevail all over the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): I want to begin by congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and by wishing him every success in the upcoming year.

As we all know, the global community faces a great number of challenges, of which climate change is only one. But I am sure that we all want to send a message of solidarity and sympathy tonight to the millions of people in the Caribbean who are suffering from the ravages of Hurricane Maria. It is an especially cruel ordeal so soon after Hurricane Irma paved a path of destruction through the Caribbean and the southern part of the United States. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected.

The Fijian people share a special sense of solidarity with those who have lost either loved ones or their

homes and possessions in such events. Last year, we lost 44 of our own people and a third of our gross domestic product when Fiji was struck by the biggest cyclone in its history. So, as the incoming President of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-23), I am deeply conscious of the need to lead a global response to the underlying causes of such events. The appalling suffering in the Caribbean and the United States reminds us all that there is no time to waste.

I would also like to pay tribute to the new President's predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, the first Fijian to occupy the presidency of the General Assembly. Ambassador Thomson carried out his role with great distinction, and I especially want to thank him for the role he has played in bringing the parlous state of our oceans to global attention. The Ocean Conference that Fiji co-hosted with Sweden in June was an unqualified success. As a global community, we have begun the massive task of restoring the health of our oceans and tackling the overfishing that is stripping them of marine life and depriving millions of people of a precious resource, now and in the future. I salute the United Nations for appointing Ambassador Thomson as Special Envoy for the Ocean. It is an honour for Fiji to have one of our own leading an effort that is so vital to ensuring the implementation of a crucial Sustainable Development Goal.

Next year will mark the fortieth anniversary of Fiji's contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. As a small nation, we have suffered a great deal of pain from the loss of some of our finest troops on peacekeeping duties over the years. But our contribution is a very important part of how we see ourselves as a nation, with our men and women in uniform serving the global community by protecting ordinary people in troubled parts of the world. For 40 years, we have helped make the world more secure. And now we are determined to make a successful contribution to the wider security of the planet through our leadership of COP-23.

There is no escaping the fact that climate change is as great a threat to global security as any conflict. Millions of people are already on the move because of drought and the changes to agriculture that threaten their food security. History has taught us that human beings will always fight over access to water. Unless we tackle the underlying causes of climate change, we already know that some places will become unlivable and others will disappear altogether. In my own region, three of our neighbours are at risk, which is why Fiji has offered to give refuge to the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu in the event of a worst-case scenario in which their homes sink beneath the waves.

For the Fijian people, climate change is real. It affects our lives in every way. The entire villages that we are moving out of the way of rising seas, the loss of our ancestral burial grounds, the salinity affecting our crops and the constant threat of destruction to homes and infrastructure of the kind that we experienced last year are all evidence of that. The reason that our hearts go out to the people of the Caribbean right now is not only because we can empathize with them but because we fear the same fate. I implore the nations of the world to imagine a third of their gross domestic product being destroyed in the space of a year or so. Imagine another cyclone scoring a direct hit and wiping out decades of development.

It is clear that global warming changes our very understanding of what our national interests are. It challenges us to understand that the only way for every nation to put itself first is to lock arms with every other nation and move forward together. Anything else is self-destructive for the world and for each nation. It may be tempting for political leaders to show that they are protecting some national industry or near-term economic goal, but we must ask at what cost. Wise leaders must work hard to convince their peoples to embrace the path that we know that we must take. There is no choice to be made between prosperity and a healthy climate, for how prosperous can we be if we must devote our resources to relocating entire populations or reinforcing major cities? How much does it cost to find new places to farm? What will the consequences be for global and regional security if nations begin to compete for safe land or have conflicts over the movements of climate refugees? It is obvious that we need to cooperate.

We need to learn from each other and use the world's considerable resources to do the greatest possible amount of good for the greatest possible number of people. We need to continue to create prosperity and ensure the well-being of the nations and ecosystems of the world. If we view the process as some sort of negotiation in which each country tries to preserve its narrow national interests, we will all lose. We will be powerless to protect our own people from the consequences of climate change. Collective action

is the only way forward. Wise men and women will understand that.

That is why I took on the role of President of COP-23 and why I have eagerly embraced the opportunity to be the first Pacific Islander to do so. It is about ensuring that my own people flourish and prosper, now and in the future. By collaborating with the other nations of the world through the process, we will ensure that together, humankind can flourish and prosper. Morocco will pass the ball to me and the Fijian team in Bonn in November, and we thank the Moroccan presidency of COP-22 for making such great strides towards the goal of fully implementing the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Next year, Fiji will pass the ball to Poland. I want to assure the Polish presidency of COP-24 that Fiji will be supporting it throughout the entire process.

Our own presidency would not be possible without Germany's wonderful assistance. We simply could not have staged an event of such size and complexity in Fiji. Out of necessity, we have forged a bond with Germany that is an example to the world of how countries at opposite ends of the Earth and of vastly different means and size can work effectively for a common goal. We did it with Sweden at the Ocean Conference in June, and we are equally proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Germany to deliver on the goals that the Paris Agreement has outlined.

Fiji is deeply conscious that Governments alone cannot overcome the challenge at hand. That is why we are placing such emphasis on the notion of a grand coalition of Governments at every level with civil society, the private sector and ordinary citizens moving the agenda forward. I am reaching out to governors, mayors and leaders of every sort across our societies, people of faith, people on the front line in the climate struggle, women and the young people who represent our future. We are going to do things differently in Bonn. The formal proceedings will be led by our chief negotiator, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, and I will play a roving role. I will be on hand to resolve any difficulties that arise in the formal negotiations. In order to reflect the importance of our grand coalition, I will be travelling between the two zones in Bonn, that of the formal negotiations and the climate action zone, along with my good friend and our climate champion, Mr. Inia Seruiratu, as well as my fellow Pacific leaders. I am counting on them to help me get the message across that only by working together can we move the process faster and further.

In the climate action zone — the Bonn zone — Fiji and Germany are bringing together all those who have a part to play in making our grand coalition a great transformation, including climate activists, companies at the cutting edge of technology, artists, creative people, dancers and performers. We will be stamping the zone with the Fijian *bula* spirit of optimism and inclusiveness that has made our islands famous throughout the world. In the formal Bula zone, we want the nations of the world to embrace what we in Fiji and some other Pacific countries call the spirit of *talanoa*, characterized by dialogue based on trust, empathy and the collective good. In our experience, it is the best way of getting things done, especially in difficult circumstances. It embodies engagement that is respectful, honest and cooperative and acknowledges that none of us, no matter how powerful, can solve the climate challenge on our own. For humankind to survive, flourish and prosper, we have no alternative but to cooperate.

We have already established a solid foundation for our efforts in the presidency. The formal negotiations are progressing, and we are looking forward to welcoming ministers and their delegations and representatives of civil society to Fiji next month for our pre-COP meeting. We are already delighted to see the energy and sense of purpose of the leaders in our grand coalition. I am especially grateful to Governor Jerry Brown of California, whom I have appointed to help me as Special Envoy for States and Regions and who heads an impressive list of political leaders around the world who are part of the Under2 Coalition. As we all know, the Paris Agreement calls for global warming to be kept well under 2°C above the average temperature of the industrial age and as close as possible to 1.5°C.

A year ago I stood here, before my appointment as President of COP-23, and called for 1.5°C to be our target (see A/71/PV.8). I meant it then and I mean it now. Fixing that number as our objective is urgent, and we must do it as soon as possible. I certainly carry with me the authority of the Pacific to pursue that objective, and at this point I would like to pay heartfelt tribute to a Pacific islander whom we have just lost but whose legacy will live on in these negotiations. Two years ago, Tony deBrum of the Marshall Islands took a very powerful slogan to Paris — "One point five to stay alive". We intend to honour Tony's legacy, and I intend to draw on his spirit during my presidency.

In addition to ensuring decisive action to limit global warming, we must also do a lot more to make nations and communities more resilient where the effects of climate change are concerned. We know that we are all going to have to adapt. But we must make special provision for those who are most vulnerable and have the fewest resources for coping with the catastrophic consequences we are witnessing all around us. We are pleased to be part of a serious engagement with Governments and the private sector aimed at securing innovative and more affordable access to insurance so that those affected by disasters can recover more quickly. It is a question of fairness and economic development, because without insurance, many nations and communities find restoration and rebuilding simply too great a burden. We are also encouraged by the rapid development of clean, affordable alternative-energy solutions for countries across the world, which offers great promise that we can achieve the 1.5°C target and prosper.

I have no doubt that the role that I have embraced as COP-23 President is the most important ever undertaken by a Fijian leader. I appeal to my fellow Pacific leaders to support me as we tackle the greatest challenge that our region and the world have ever seen. I want to acknowledge the work of the past 30 years of the Alliance of Small Island States, which has consistently looked after the interests of our peoples and reminded the world that our interests are the interests of every global citizen. We are all in the same canoe, which is why we will have a Fijian ocean-going canoe — a *na drua* — in the main hall in Bonn to remind everyone of the need to fill its sails with the collective determination to move this process forward and deliver on the promise we made to each other in Paris. To all the nations that have yet to ratify the Paris Agreement, I say, please do so.

I appeal to the nations of the world and to all the leaders of the grand coalition for their support. I draw my power as COP President from them and I will do everything in my power to use it wisely.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Bourita (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success in his noble task. We would also like to commend his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his excellent work and the successes that his presidency brought.

We would like to reiterate our support for the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to reform the United Nations and its mechanisms on the political, economic and security fronts. The proposed reforms create new dynamics, giving new momentum to the Organization's activities and strengthening the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We would also like to express the support of the Kingdom of Morocco for the road map that the Secretary-General has proposed for mediation and preventive diplomacy in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, building on efforts to maintain peace, realize sustainable development and combat terrorism. Our world today is at a crossroads that is having a direct effect on our collective efforts to achieve sustainable development, strengthen peace and security and lay the foundations of cooperation, and I would therefore like to address three relevant issues.

First, there can be no doubt that while walls between nations have come down and the numbers of victims have diminished, there have emerged new threats to security, such as terrorism, extremism, separatist movements and climate change, that are no less dangerous than previous ones. It is clear that while globalization has greatly boosted the international economy, it also triggered the economic and financial crisis that led to increased unemployment and poverty and deepened social differences within States.

Secondly, while information technology has witnessed great developments, including expanded networks and growing numbers of users, some terrorist organizations have sought to use those developments to undermine security and stability, threaten the peace of individuals and erode development efforts, while still others have used them to advance their criminal enterprises. This situation, which gives a glimpse of the future of our world, is very threatening because we are

unable to foresee what is coming. We therefore have to reform our collective working mechanisms in order to improve their predictive capacities.

Thirdly, there are those who believe that they have the ability and resources to fend for themselves against these difficulties. However, the Kingdom of Morocco believes that only an effective, multilateral global organization can resolve the collective problems that we are all facing.

We can no longer look at Africa as a burden on the international community. We Africans do not believe that our continent has ever been a burden on the world, despite the misunderstandings and unfair rulings and judgements that exist. Africa has yet to take its proper place on the world's agenda, which cannot be based on the numbers of conferences dedicated to it, related agenda items taken up or resolutions adopted. The continent's problems cannot be addressed through the mere provision of assistance. Given its varied natural and human resources — including approximately a billion young people — its fertile lands and abundant water, Africa has enormous potential.

Thanks to the foresight of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, over the past two decades Morocco has made South-South cooperation the basis of its foreign policy, reflecting the King's view that such cooperation represents a promising foundation for the efforts of the international community. Morocco has adopted a realistic approach to forging partnerships and is supplying human resources and technological know-how to assist African countries in their efforts. In an address to the people of Morocco on 20 August 2016, His Majesty emphasized that Morocco does not view Africa as a market for the sale and promotion of Moroccan products or as a source of quick profits, but as a forum for joint action to save the region and develop African cities. That is why we have sought to establish partnerships with a number of African countries aimed at supporting economic growth and integration and providing jobs and security. That was not a decision fuelled by opportunism but a historic commitment emerging from the King's deep understanding of the continent, as he expressed at the twenty-eighth session of the Summit of the African Union when he said, "Africa is my continent. Africa is my home".

With the same commitment and determination, Morocco will continue to shoulder its responsibility within the African Union as a founding member of its precursor, the Organization of African Unity, and as a committed partner that has never disappointed the African continent but rather has always defended it in regional and international forums. We are always eager to serve Africa and realize its ambitions and objectives. Morocco is committed to multilateralism and to finding the right answers to problems, based on the international community's three important areas of responsibility — migration, climate change and the fight against terrorism and extremism — and attested to by the confidence that the international community has placed in Morocco, which bases its approach on aligning its national priorities with those on the United Nations agenda and on sharing its experience with African partners.

As Chair of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, Morocco, along with the Netherlands, works to strengthen national and regional cooperation and to share its experience in combating terrorism with its African brothers and partners by sharing information and expertise, as well as through religious training programmes that reject all forms of intolerance and extremism and that have reached hundreds of thousands of imams and leaders, men and women, of various African nationalities, at centres such as the Institute of Mohammed V and the Mohammed VI Foundation for African Ulema.

Morocco co-chairs the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which seeks to develop proposals that are not limited to security issues but are also informed by the development and human aspects of migration. We hope those efforts will be included in the global compact on migration to be adopted by the United Nations in 2018. Within the African Union, King Mohammed will be presenting a concept paper on developing a joint African approach to migration and its root causes. Morocco has also developed a strategy for activating a process that can help African citizens south of the Sahara fully enjoy their economic and social rights.

With regard to climate change, Morocco presided over the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakech in November 2016. Qualitative changes were made during the session in translating the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into practical measures, as well as the adoption of the Marrakech Declaration, which states that efforts to achieve development and sustainable development

represent a high-level political commitment that should be honoured with a balanced and cooperative approach that meets the needs of least developed countries and developing nations.

Africa is at the heart of Morocco's interests in this regard. His Majesty chaired the first African summit on climate change, which resulted in an ambitious and balanced action plan that reflects the continent's commitment to shouldering its responsibilities with regard to international efforts. At the national level, Morocco has adopted an ambitious policy for addressing the effects of climate change, particularly where renewable energy is concerned. It should reduce our energy needs by 42 per cent by 2020 and 52 per cent by 2030, as well as lowering our carbon dependency. It should also attract promising international investment in the development of clean energy.

Since the 1960s, the Kingdom of Morocco has been committed to the United Nations cause in deploying peacekeeping forces in Africa. We have contributed to those international forces by sending military units totalling 6,000 soldiers to six countries — Angola, the Congo, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, where there are currently more than 1,600 Moroccan military personnel. I would like to express Morocco's deep concern about the irresponsible attacks that have recently been made on international peacekeepers. Such attacks trample on United Nations values and should be considered war crimes whose perpetrators should be brought to justice. The Kingdom of Morocco shares the Organization's concern about such attacks and therefore requests that the Secretariat take appropriate measures to protect peacekeepers in conflict zones. Today, we need a new approach to peacekeeping operations, making troop-contributing countries central to their decision-making in a way that is based on the values of the United Nations.

The Palestinian question was one of the first just causes taken up by the United Nations following its inception, yet no solution has been found to date, nor is any agreement in sight, despite the tremendous efforts made by the international community, especially the current United States Administration. The Kingdom of Morocco, whose King Mohammed VI chairs the Al-Quds Al-Sharif Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, reiterates its rejection of any attempts aimed at changing the historical and legal status of the Holy City and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and renews its calls to the Israeli authorities to cease such practices.

The Arab Maghreb is still dealing with the difficult issues that have resulted from the lack of political cooperation and the vulnerable security situation produced by the crisis in Libya. This raises questions for the parties that are still dealing with past conflicts, such as in the Moroccan Sahara. If the international community wishes to achieve a peaceful settlement based on consensus, and if the Moroccan initiative for self-rule there is to gain more support, the parties in the region involved in that dispute should abandon their two-faced discourse and assume their responsibilities. Morocco would like to emphasize its readiness to work in honestly and transparently with the Secretary-General and Mr. Horst Köhler, his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, in order to reach a peaceful settlement that can maintain Morocco's territorial integrity and sovereignty, based on the self-rule initiative.

Morocco is also developing a policy to enable the people of the Moroccan Sahara to rule themselves and thus to enable North-West Africa to mitigate the dangers of separatism, Balkanization, extremism and terrorism. In that context, we would like to call the Assembly's attention to the terrible situation in the Tindouf refugee camps and urge the international community to put pressure on the host country to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to respond to the Secretary-General's call and register everyone in the camps.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Miguel Vargas Maldonado, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Vargas Maldonado (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured to address the General Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic. At the outset, I would like to apologize on behalf of Mr. Danilo Madina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, for his absence from the debate, as he has had to return to our country to deal with Hurricane Maria.

Our meeting this week coincides with the devastating season of natural disasters that our region has been enduring for nearly a month with terrible consequences. The disasters have also spread to Mexico, which has been hit by two destructive earthquakes, and the southern United States, viciously punished by Hurricane Harvey. In the catalogue of human suffering

caused by Hurricane Irma, that of Antigua and Barbuda stands out, particularly Barbuda, 90 per cent of whose infrastructure has collapsed, according to its Prime Minister, Gaston Browne. Hardly had Irma's devastating winds dropped than Maria arrived, leaving a new trail of destruction and death, inflicting a direct hit first on Dominica and today on its neighbour Puerto Rico, causing great destruction and damage.

We take this opportunity to express our solidarity with Puerto Rico, which is also our neighbour, as well as with all the countries affected. The people of the Dominican Republic offer their deepest sympathy for the destruction and the large numbers of victims. Accurate figures for the damage done on Saint Barthélemy, Saint Maarten, Anguilla, the Virgin Islands, Tortola, Turks and Caicos, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and especially Florida and Cuba, have yet to be determined. However, we can say that they have suffered substantial damage, that recovery will take years and that, tragically, valuable lives have been lost.

To give Member States an idea of how severely we have been affected, despite the lack of definitive figures, I can say that the material losses caused by this hurricane season alone far exceed the gross domestic product of the Dominican Republic. We often focus on material damage and ignore the human suffering caused by such disasters, whose lethal power has been aggravated by climate change. The statistics are striking, but they cannot reflect the pain of the victims, their desolation at seeing so much work ruined and so many efforts, visions and dreams lost. It is not just houses that have been lost, it is homes. Material damage has been done, but above all, lives have been shattered.

We must recognize the inherent dangers of climate change, which are far more significant in the context of the geography of the Caribbean. Our economies, our way of life and our potential for development are in jeopardy. The vulnerability of the Caribbean and of the Dominican Republic poses a risk that we cannot face alone. While our country was fortunate enough not to suffer human losses during the recent passage of Hurricane Irma, we are aware that, like every Caribbean island, we will always be vulnerable to this type of phenomenon.

That reality impels us to once again draw the Assembly's attention to the crucial importance of joining forces to confront such threats. It compels us to act in a responsible and united way to defend the lives of our people. And I would like to be extremely clear on this point. The messages of solidarity and the humanitarian aid that always follow such disasters are not enough. Nor is it enough to sign agreements on climate change. There is an urgent and critical need to act coherently on those agreements in order to advance a united agenda and set concrete plans in motion.

We are facing a growing problem that knows no borders and requires the cooperation and solidarity of all of us, but especially the most developed and most powerful countries. We are facing a reality that will oblige us to act as responsibly as we can if we do not want to go on lamenting the consequences. That is why my country is once again proposing to the Assembly that we create a special fund for dealing with this type of disaster and for prevention and early warning, which will help us save lives. If we want to see an example of how economic resources can help to mitigate the damage done by natural phenomena, we need only look at the United States. After the most recent hurricanes, its Government, which has the necessary resources, immediately made $15 billion available for rebuilding its affected states, thereby providing its citizens with the help they needed. Conversely, there is no way that vulnerable areas such as the island region of the Caribbean can cope with the devastation that such phenomena inflict on our peoples and countries.

As an example, take my own country, the Dominican Republic. This year, natural phenomena in the form of rains and floods have damaged thousands of kilometres of highways and roads, resulting in substantial losses. Dozens of bridges have collapsed and miles of retaining walls and irrigation canals have been destroyed. Thousands of acres of mixed farmland that are vital to keeping our people fed every day have been lost. In addition, among much other damage, hundreds of homes have been destroyed, not counting those hit by Hurricane Irma. We have spent more than $500 million on rescue and relief operations just in the past few months.

We are therefore concerned about the fact that similar, or even more powerful, events resulting from climate change have the potential to set the development of ours and other Caribbean countries back 10 years. I am talking about snatching away a whole people's happiness and prospects for the future. That is not something we can continue to take lightly. It is in that

context that the work of the United Nations and the solidarity between our countries make most sense.

On behalf of all the men, women, children and elderly people who are utterly desperate right now, I urge all of us to seek ways for the United Nations to support Governments that cannot cope on their own in rebuilding their countries in the wake of natural disasters. Let us take the necessary steps to make that aid available and ensure that it reaches those in desperate need. It is part of our responsibility as brother nations. I would also like to call on the countries of the United Nations to reflect anew, and urgently, on what we must do in order to counteract extreme climate events. The scientific evidence for the relationship between natural disasters, man-made change and global warming is quite sufficient. It is time for us to play our part and act to slow down events, or the future will judge us for our total lack of responsibility.

Since the Organization was founded, 72 years ago, our country has been a member of the unique experience in the history of humankind that is its creation. Since then, the United Nations has been a beacon pointing the way to a future of hope. We must never fall into complacency on that road. We know that essential aspects of our civilization, such as peace, security and development, are not gifts that drop from the sky. They are not something that we can take for granted. They are the result of a commitment between our peoples that must be constantly renewed and that we must keep working for. The Dominican Republic is fully committed to that vision and to the search for comprehensive solutions to the challenges facing the international community. We are determined to contribute energetically to building an ever-more democratic, participatory and effective United Nations to help solve our peoples' real problems.

The meeting rose at 9.35 p.m.